



Dignitaries and family honor the memory of Gilberto Francois “Betico” Croes

His Excellency, Governor Fredis Refunol and Prime Minister Nel Oduber were joined by members of Parliament and other local dignitaries on the morning of Thursday, January 25 in paying tribute to the memory of Gilberto Francois “Betico” Croes during the official ceremony held in the plaza that bears his name. The placing of reefs and raising of the flag that took place before the statue that honors his memory is a tradition upheld since his birthday became a national holiday. Attending his first major event in his capacity as the official representative of the Dutch Government in Aruba was the recently arrived Drs. Laurens Knegt, accompanied by his wife, Anja.

Gilberto Francois “Betico” Croes, born in 1938, was the founder and long time leader of the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo (M.E.P.) political party and instrumental in Aruba receiving “Status Aparte” from the Netherlands Antilles in 1986. He was a proponent of the growth of tourism as an industry on Aruba, which relied on the Lago Refinery as the foundation of the economy in his time. He visualized and encouraged a number of projects, including the Sasaki Highway and others that were realized after his demise. He went into a coma after a car accident on December 31, 1985, the eve of Aruba officially launching its independence, and died in 1986 from his injuries. “Betico” Croes is also called “El Libertador” and considered the “Father of Aruban Status Aparte.”

After the raising of the flag by the Boy Scouts of Aruba, the ritualized ceremony continued with the placing of wreaths at the base of his statue by President of Parliament, Drs. Mervin Wyatt Ras accompanied by Jacqueline Bastien. Prime Minister Oduber and Peter Davidse represented the Aruban Government, and the Gilberto Croes, Jr. accompanied by his sister, Glendeline Saladin-Croes represented the family in placing a wreath. Senora Enny Arendsz and Edwina Croes placed a wreath in the name of the Foundation Betico Cores.

Robbie Brete as Master of Ceremonies conducted the brief but poignant ceremony, which included young poet Rosabelle Illis recited an original work dedicated to the memory of “Betico” Croes, and an address by Prime Minister Oduber. He reminded all islanders that making Aruba successful requires the sort of effort and sacrifice that “Betico” Croes made for the island to achieve Status Aparte, and that the memory of his efforts are an example to all.

The Prime Minister’s Address was followed by the singing of the National Anthem “Aruba Dushi Terra” by the musical group “De Trupialen,” which continued to entertain the gathering with a selection of popular folkloric music. During this time, government officials welcomed the congratulatory greetings of the public and dignitaries, and offered them return.

Additionally attending the official ceremonies was Glenbert Croes, son of “Betico” Croes, and quite politically active in the recent past. On behalf of the family he expressed that they “were very happy that this day continues to be commemorated all over Aruba.” He agreed with the Prime Minister’s message that the memory of “Betico” Croes “should be an inspiration to all citizens of Aruba to give our support and contributions to the best development of this island, in every sense of the word. We (the family) are very happy to see the memory of our father alive in such a very important way.”